The Divine Image





Caroline Giltinan


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A BOOK OF LYRICS

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BY

CAROLINE GILTINÀN

"For this, for this the lights innumerable
As symbols shine that we the true light win:
For every star and every deep they fill
Are stars and deeps within."
A. E. (George W. Russell)



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IN LOVING REMEMBRANCE OF

My Mother

HELEN McCAFFREY GILTINAN

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CONTENTS

THE DIVINE IMAGE

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THE BREEZE

Something touched me as I
walked
Beneath the silent trees—
A soft caress against my lips—
It may have been a breeze;

But with it came the thought of
you
And all you've grown to mean.
A wandering wind,—or was it
you:
A messenger unseen?

The bright new leaves grew very
still;
They did not dance or play.
Nor did my heart—for, in a
breath,
The breeze had gone away.

OVER NIGHT, A ROSE

That over night a rose could come
I, one time did believe,
For when the fairies live with one,
They wilfully deceive.
But now I know this perfect thing
Under the frozen sod
In cold and storm grew patiently
Obedient to God.
My wonder grows, since knowledge came
Old fancies to dismiss;
And courage comes. Was not the rose
A winter doing this?
Nor did it know, the weary while,
What color and perfume
With this completed loveliness
Lay in that earthy tomb.

So maybe I, who cannot see
What God wills not to show,
May, some day, bear a rose for Him
It took my life to grow.

THE COWARD

It lies before my wounded feet:
The cross I am to bear.
Blocking my path, it frightens me
To see it lying there.

And yet I dare not turn away,
Nor yet dare go around.
God! give me strength to carry it:
The thing upon the ground!

WHEN DARKNESS COVERED THE EARTH

Blood-guilty with blood of the
Sinless One
And tortured by memory,
Three wretched men, ere the night
had run,
Travelled from Calvary.

Sharing their grief and bitter fear,
(Since hatred had gone with the
sun!)
Shudderingly, each man asked to
hear
What work the others had done.

"I am the one who plaited
The crown of briar and thorn.
God! how His hair was matted!
God! how His head was torn!"

"And I, when He asked, denied
  Him
A draught from my brimming
  grail."
"Woe, woe—unto me, I despised
  Him
And drave through His hand the
  nail."

CLOUDS

(*A child speaks*)

Those fleecy, white and floating things
They are the backs of angels' wings.
They can't be impolite, you know,
And turn to look on us below,
But always keep their faces toward
Our Lady Mary and the Lord.
Yet, I can guess what lovely things
Are hidden by those angel-wings.

THE COURTYARD PIGEONS

Dear birds, that flutter happily
Against the grey stone wall,
That hides the joyous sun from me,
Do you not hear my call?
Each weary day when you go past
To strut and perch up there,—
Or when you soar away so fast,
I watch you,—and I care:
For, in your iridescent flight,
My eyes have learned to see
How, in this strange and man-made night,
One thing, at least, goes free.
And do you know what you have taught
In low and cooing cries?

Though much is gone, they have not bought
The part of me that flies!

MARY FITTON, TO MASTER WILL SHAKESPEARE

"The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman color'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil
Wooing his purity with her foul pride."

So long a time, and is it fair to keep
My image darkened in your bitter word
That stabs my heart, though dust, as if a sword

Turned there to wound, and made
the wound more deep?
Had I been foul, would both your
angels weep?
Though the times spurned, to
me a singing bird
Your vision came in music my
being heard
Color'd with Prospero's island-
haunted sleep.

Why was I blind, when most I
wished to see—
Accepting less than what was
tossed away:
Unknowing then, this world
beyond what seems—
This world from which you have
exilèd me?
Around your moods, I, as your
angel, play;
And am a part of all your
greatest dreams!

MY HEART IS FULL OF VAGRANT SONGS

My heart is full of vagrant songs
That, flashing to and fro,
Escape the words which covet
them
And tease me as they go.

But in the woods they seldom
come;
Underneath the trees
My songs are silent, for I hear
More lovely sounds than these.

The stream is dashing over rocks:
Two voices can be heard.
From where the green is still and
thick
Come the love-notes of a bird.

MATER SALVATORIS

Against thy breast and covered with thy hair
Christ Jesus lay, for God so trusted thee
His only Son was born — dear mystery! —
A helpless Baby, needing all thy care.
Sweet Mary, was He even then aware —
The little Saviour shepherds came to see
In Bethlehem — that to His Calvary
Thy love must follow and His Passion share?

And ever since, each sinner is thy child
For whom thy tender pity doth beseech;

My Blessed Lady, take me to
my Brother.
He would forgive, if only once
He smiled:
With memories, His heart of
mercy reach,
For God is Love and thou—
thou art His Mother.

WANTING SO THE FACE DIVINE

To M——

Wanting so the Face divine,
I searched within this soul of mine,
But there the Image is so dim:
Unlike, unlike, it seems to Him.

Weary of heart, with faith grown weak,
Again, the vanished Face I seek.
Lo! in my need, God sends me *thee:*
And from thy soul, He smiles on me!

THE LITTLE MAID

Three Saints of Heaven wanted,
 long ere thy life began,
One perfect little earth-child and
 asked God for *thee,* Jeanne.
Saint Michael, strong and valiant;
 Saint Margaret, mother, queen;
Saint Catherine, virgin, saw thee,
 a little maid, thirteen.
Then each one came to visit thee,
 bewildered, frightened child,
And each one gave a gift most rare
 to still thy heart so wild.
Saint Catherine kept thee chaste
 and sweet; Saint Michael, like
 a man;
Thy beauty, courage, strength of
 soul, Saint Margaret mothered,
 Jeanne.
Each Saint so loved thee each one
 stayed a constant guardian . . .

They saved thee for the Sacred
Breast whose Heart most loves
thee, Jeanne!

MAGIC

A world transformed! There
  flashes
 One vivifying gleam:
My heart, the tabernacle,
 I, warder of the Dream.

REALISM

Did planning bugs and toads and
  worms
Make the Creator sad?
Well, at the Thought of wooded
  hills,
I think that God was glad.

WOULD THE SKY BE BEAUTIFUL?

Would the sky be beautiful if it
were not blue;
And if the grass were not so green
Would crocuses peep through?
Suppose the morn came silently
Without this burst of song;
And had we never loved, my dear,
Would all our days seem long?

But God has made the sky all
blue;
The grass a vivid green;
While just beneath the softened
mold,
A garden grows unseen.
And I—I call thee through the
dawn
When birds awake to sing:
Oh, Life is full of mystery:
Belovèd, it is Spring!

ALL THAT I LOVE

All that I love lies sleeping
Under a new-made mound.

To-night I see the sky again:
And the moon is nearly round.

"VIVE LA FRANCE!"

In a crowded car we crossed the
 bridge,
Packed in like silly sheep
With more than one resenting
A rudely broken sleep.
The river slowly sullen,
The sky a sordid grey,
And drizzling rain combined to
 make
A dull and cheerless day.
Arrestingly, we saw it:
A poorly printed scrawl
In chalk which stood out clearly
Against an old black wall.
Life suddenly grew vital
In one, swift, thrilling glance:
A heart and soul had blazoned
 there
The letters: "VIVE LA FRANCE!"

DURANCE

My friend, God-given with the years,
This night of agony
Too deep and sharp for words or tears,
I offer all for thee.

Where is the feeling heart of me?
A thing of stone lies there:
Can waiting, helpless misery
And speechless grief be prayer?

CHIPS

On brooks and rivers, creeks and
streams,
Were logs and rafts and chips
afloat;
But on some shore, dreaming its
dreams,
A worthless chip said: "I'm a
boat.
To mid-stream waters I must go;
Here the eddies only play,
There I'll feel the ebb and flow.
I think I'll make the trip today."

Yet, the shore line held it fast,
Helpless, hopeless, always
twirled,
And the hurrying boats went past
While the chip unceasing swirled.
Then he came — a little child —
To the bank to sail a ship

And, with rapture almost wild,
He saw one in the lonely chip.

With boyish, laughing, shouting joy
He worked to set the new boat loose;
It sailed, a bobbing, happy toy —
A chip that realized its use.

. . . . . .

And I, a woman, idly float
Quite near the shore, a useless chip.
I pray a Child who wants a boat
Believes I am His waiting ship.

CERTAINTY

Sleep, darling, in my arms
Nestled close against my breast,
Here you're safe from all harms,
And so, we both know rest.
Your roughened head fills so well
The warm nest God made to fit;
Your soft flesh, relaxing, fell
Clinging and content in it.

Your sweet, moist breath, and
each start
Tell me of the coming goal.
Selfish I press to my heart
The body of the dreaming soul,
(Begging so) and whisper lowly,
Wanting a good-bye from you,
And the heavy lids lift slowly:
"Yes; me lub you. Sure I do!"

AFTER DARK

When muzzer and me go up the stairs,
I undress quick and say my prayers.
And den, when all of dem is said,
And jes' before I hop in bed,
My muzzer and me, we has a chat;
We hug and kiss — I 'member dat.
I'm almost t'ree and getting tall —
An' after dat,— why dat is all!

COST

Little Boy in the manger
Who saved a world from woe,
Did You lie there freezing?
She could not have it so!
Snuggled against her throbbing
breast,
Wrapped in her own soft hair,
Warmth You shared with every
breath,
Happy and peaceful there.

But when You left her shielding
arms,
Saviour of fallen men,
Bitter cold You did endure,—
She could not warm You then!
She could not warm Your Body;
She could not bear Your Rod;
She bore, instead, a bleeding
heart.
Oh, were we worth it, God?

CRY OF THE CHILDLESS

My baby never came!
He is but dream and name!
These empty arms so curve and
ache
Feed their hunger. For Christ's
sake
Lift this grief, of me a part,
From my lonely breaking heart.
Let my breasts his pressure feel!
God of Pity, make him real!

PROTEST

Handmaid of a swift machine,
She acts her weary part;
While loud above the clanging
  noise
Beats her rebellious heart.

Poor prisoner! it pleads for life
With protest ceaseless, strong,
Against these sterile, empty years
So endless and so wrong!

She is denied her rightful task,
Debarred from Nature's plan:
A fettered slave of a machine,
Not mother of a man!

SHACKLED

In stress and strain and whirr of things
That complicate life so,
We hide an instinct's perfect wings
And dare not let them show.

They know,— the bush, the bird, the bee,—
Their part, so old, yet new;
Do all things know, save you and me,
The work that they must do?

The prayerful wish for work denied
Has set my spirit free.
If but, for us, 'twere simplified
As for that budding tree.

TO MY VICTROLA

Within this mute Victrola lie
strangely prisoned joys!
"Not music"? Well, what is it?
. . . . How can you call it
"noise."

When twilight comes to hurt me
with memories I fear,
(For we were once so happy and
now — he is not here)
I bid this friend of melody the
stabbing silence break
And in the dusk, it comforts me
and lessens sorrow's ache.
I hear James Whitcomb Riley
his quaintest story tell;
Or Schubert leads my heart within
some eerie, woodland dell.
When Gadski sings the "Ave,"
great Gounod's music-prayer,
My soul seeks out "Maria" and
asks for strength to bear;

Or Melba sings the lovely songs of many years ago;
And, for a change, there is a waltz from Victor Herbert's show;
Then Lauder sings of lassies and other Scottish folk
Until we hum the lilting air and chuckle at his joke.
If very brave, I listen to Caruso's maddened cry:
"Aïda! ah, Celeste!" he sobs; so, in my heart, do I!
There's Kreisler and Maud Powell; the love-songs from "Boheme"
And "Butterfly"; with lesser things we know without their name.
Each record brings its different mood. When gone,— the lingering light,—

And stars come flickering through
the dark and it is nearly night,
I want a bit of Chopin with passion's throbbing spell,
Where, even in his "Funèbre," it
only ebbs to swell.
Then, at the close, McCormack
who tenderly will sing
A ballad of his Ireland and make
"God bless you!" ring,
For if I close my burning eyes,
another man I see
And through the dark, I feel his
arms, and—"hear him calling
me!"
"Not music?" *This:* the power
whose poignant, piercing tone
Can baffle night and loneliness
until I'm *not* alone?

RODIN'S "HAND OF GOD"

It is God's great Hand
Holding two He planned.
They, from all else whirled,
One in the other furled,
Fill the only place
Their own in vast space.
With arms tightly clasped,
Love's mystery is unasked.
Life to life is given.—
   Marble, man-riven!

HIS WOMAN

In the pale, murmuring dawn she lay
Alone, with nothing more to lose.
Her eyes one soft white arm espied
And lips too tired to voice her pride
Caressed and kissed a bruise.

TRADITION

Above, about, they flutter:
Dim hands of women long since
dead
Who touch me lovingly.
These women of my ancient line,
Each with her part in me,
Are banded now against myself —
The self I want to be.
Frightened, they beg me to re-
turn;
And, clutching, hold me so!—
Help me escape these phantom
hands:
Belovèd, must I go?

Only to blur it: the vision!
  Only to feel less *alive*
To be freed from this wish to
    surrender
  Against which I always must
    strive.

To cease, for one instant, this
    thinking;
  To know only joy,— and not sin.
Unwelcome one guest: the grey
    stranger
  Who came when my Love en-
    tered in.

Why need my heart fight against
    me?
  For succor, I reach out my
    hand
To her whom they stoned in
    Samaria . . .

  God! how we two *understand!*

THE HUNGRY

Whom does He love the most —
The poor, the sick, the blind,
The rich, the maimed, the host
Unknowingly unkind?

The ones who strive, and fail;
The ones who have, and lose;
The ones who will not quail
Nor martyrdom refuse?

The wind went sobbing low
To His great Heart and cried:
"Dear God, they need you so,—
Who die unsatisfied."

BEFORE THE DAWN

At night, sweetheart, I am with thee,
For dreaming sleep unfetters me;
And, when released, my soul goes where
Her truest, purest thought may dare.

Reluctantly, she comes away—
A captive to the bonds of day—
And leaves one lovely word unsaid:
Dear, must it wait till we are *dead?*

THE INTERLOPER

She played with Love: the little
    god.
  This pink and chubby boy
Was asking soon to own her heart,
  For Love will have his toy.

Then bolder waxed the prankish
    Love
  Before he stole away;
Nor has he yet returned the heart
  She cries for night and day.

A strange, strong man withholds
    it now,—
  A man of flame and fire! —
Love is full-grown: the little god
  In manhood, is Desire.

PROFICIENT

One time I feared (before I knew
The man you've grown to be)
That you would never understand
This complicated me.
That fear is dead! Another one
As urgent, bids me tell:
When you are listening to my heart,
You understand too well!

MATED

At last I see him undisguised —
Unkind, unclean, uncouth,—
Deceiving dream, come back and hide
The terror of the truth.

ABSENCE

All melody comes to me muted;
All time — one eternal, dull day!
The heavens and earth have been
  looted:
The soul of my world is away!

TOLL

Love seemed a fearsome foe!
Alarmed,
Her breast she guarded 'gainst his dart.
Love came, a laughing god, unarmed,
And slipped two hands beneath her heart.

But, all the while, Love played his game:
The happy time he made his stay,—
Though empty-handed when he came,
Not so, the Love that went away.

THE CHANGELING

Until you came, he lived with me:
My dream-child to be born some day;
And, with our hopes, so happily
The boy and I once dared to play.
But now, when he has grown so real —
This child who would become your son! —
My trembling flesh shrinks from the feel
Of him — poor, little, wistful one.
So, from my breast your babe I tear
(God! if I dared to let him stay!)

And strangle what I must not bear:
Nor shall you drag my hands away!

THE CONJURER

Dear little one, with tender heart
You gave to me a kiss unsought
And in a sudden holiness,
I felt the sacred gift it brought.

With bending soul, I signed the cross —
That blessing which begins my prayer —
Because thy seeking baby lips
Discovered mine and rested there.

From out the potent, silent dusk
My own dream-children came and smiled.
You were not *then,* as now you are:
Another woman's little child.

REAPING

My son and I together saw
The man (for whom I blindly bore
This child, who never should have been)
Slip down the fatal road of sin.

For dying Love, there are no cries.
God! help me look into these eyes,
Too pure for pity, where I see:
"Why, mother, were you false to me?"

THE RANSOM

He did not know (nor would he
care,)
What blocked the road to Hell;
And yet he found it lying there
When, striking it, he fell.

But he divined that he must go
Over the road he came,
And turning left it broken so,
Unconscious of his shame.

A woman (seeming from the
dead,)
After he did depart,
Came where the road was stained
with red,
And, stooping, touched her heart.

ACHIEVEMENT

The biggest thing I ever did
Was all inside of me.
There was a battle, hardly won,
With only God to see.

When I plucked out a flaming
  brand
Whose evil light shone through,
The place it burned was black and
  charred . . .
But no one ever knew!

THE SACRIFICE

On Calvary, when Christ was dying,
A woman bitterly was crying
To Michael of the flaming sword:
"Command thy host! Avenge the Lord!"
And Michael, waiting the One call,
Watched and suffered through it all.
Then, while he stood with sword unsheathed,
The tortured God His Law bequeathed:
"Forgive thy brother from thy heart;
I ask of thee the greater part."
Though Hell itself the death denounced,

Saint Michael all revenge renounced.
So, bitterly the woman cried
On Calvary,— for Jesus died.

THE THIRTEENTH STATION

Once you journeyed with Him, Mary —
With your Son Who died for me —
Sharing all He had to suffer
On the way to Calvary.

With the expiation over,
When they laid Him on your breast,
Did a little gladness tremble
That, at last, your Son could rest?

Mother Mary, had you comfort
Though He lay there, dead and torn,
Taking from the Head of Jesus
That embedded crown of thorn?

TESTIMONY

I stood on guard in Pilate's court the day they brought Him there,—
A beaten Man Who wore a crown of thorns with regal air.
I watched while Pilate sentenced Him to suffering and death;
He stood alone and motionless with calm and even breath.
To die is not an easy thing, yet that is what He heard;
Then, turning 'round, He looked at us but never said a word.
One of the guard, I went along, though I had asked to stay,
And it was I who walked with Him through all that awful day.
He took the cross in silence,—a clumsy, wooden thing,—

And looked, absorbed and listening, toward birds that dared to sing.
The way was rough and stony for feet so bare and white;
His hair was clotted thick with blood which blinded half His sight.
The first time that He staggered beneath His heavy load,
We cursed and beat and kicked Him as He fell upon the road;
But when His Mother came to Him, He straightened up and smiled
And whispered something as He passed, as though she were His child.
But after that He needed help—so, fearing that He might die,
We called the strong man, Simon, who was idly standing nigh.

One woman named Veronica
came near to wipe His face;
Then suddenly she kissed the
cloth and hurried from the
place.
It seemed for miles — we travelled
on; the sun grew hot and then
With one sharp, little moan of
pain, the Man fell down again.
Soon after noon we met a group
of women; they all cried
And some drew close; He touched
a child in passing and He
sighed.
To each He gave some comfort.
On leaving them, He fell
And then I heard some muttered
words,— one Heaven, and one
Hell.

On Calvary, we stripped Him,—
a fine, well-muscled Man,—

And when we threw Him on the
cross, the hammering began.
I am no girl,— I've killed my
men — my record's brave and
clean;
But courage such as this Man
showed, I never yet have seen.
We finished nailing through the
hands;— the feet required one
nail,
. . . He never deigned to cry
aloud; He knew not how to
fail.
But when we raised the cross up-
right, He saw a grove of trees
And eyes half-blind from agony
smiled at the young green
leaves.
We stood around to listen, for
from the cross He spoke;
The sorrow which He seemed to
feel was all for other folk.

Three hours He hung dying . . .
I scarcely dare to think
Of all that time. He begged me once to let Him have a drink;
And once He called His Father . . . and afterward, came peace.
When He sank dead upon the cross, why should I feel release?

As they drew near,— His followers, the Mother and the rest,—
The beauty they call Magdalen wept loud and struck her breast;
The others tried to talk to her of Jesus and His laws,
But she would not be comforted and cried: "I am the cause!"
A man called John was cherishing the Mother while she wept.
Each one of these seemed far away; they were as if they slept.
But when they took Him from the cross, her arms were opened wide,—

And then again we saw the blood
still flowing from His side.
She held Him tight against her
breast the while she sobbed and
said:
"Heart of my Heart, I under-
stand; and can be glad You're
dead!"

They placed Him in the sepul-
chre (I watched until the
close);
The Man lay dead almost three
days; but afterward — HE
ROSE!



